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#### AYRES' HAWK EAGLE *HIERAAETUS DUBIUS* FEEDING ON A FRUIT BAT

On 20 November 1982 I encountered an Ayres' Hawk Eagle feeding on a fruit bat (probably of the genus *Eidolon*) at the Kakamega Forest station in Western Kenya. I had already seen a pair of hawk eagles several times earlier in the morning when, at about 10:00, I observed a large raptor glide through the canopy of the spindly second-growth forest. The bird landed in full view on a horizontal branch under the main crown of a forest tree and I recognized it as the smaller and paler bird of the pair of hawk eagles, probably the male. A conspicuous chestnut-brown 'patch' on the lower abdomen proved to be a fair-sized mammal. The bird mantled its prey with half-spread wings for several minutes before positioning the mammal to a position where I could see that it was a fruit bat. With the bat flat on its back along the branch, the wings drooping down out of the way, the hawk eagle began to feed, first tearing the fur from the neck region and then eating towards the base of the skull. Next it ate the tongue and then clipped out and cleaned a jawbone, before moving down to the breast. I watched the performance with a 20x telescope over a period of 30 minutes, and the bird was still eating when I left. Its mate never appeared during this period.

Though inexplicably rare over most of its broad range, Ayres' Hawk Eagle has been studied intimately in Kenya (see, for example, Brown 1971, Brown & Davey 1978). Small birds are the main prey of this dashing forest raptor, typically doves and a variety of medium-sized passerines. Larger gamebirds are preyed upon occasionally. Published accounts agree that some mammalian prey is taken, especially rodents, but the only species listed is *Paraxerus ochraceus*, a small squirrel (Brown et al. 1982). I can find no mention in the literature of this hawk eagle feeding on bats of any kind. Fruit bats are by no means rare in the Kakamega Forest region, and if located during the day-time are probably not difficult for this fierce predator to capture, so it seems especially interesting that it has not been recorded previously as utilizing this food source.

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